

a focusing lens mounted along said bore between said first and second end portions, for focusing said laser beam to a predetermined focal point; and

a laser beam expansion element mounted within said recess at said second end portion of said module housing, and expanding said laser beam along a predetermined direction and producing a substantially planar laser illumination beam from said laser beam expansion component.

Claim 34 (currently amended): The PLIM of claim 33, wherein said laser beam expansion component comprises a cylindrical lens element mounted within said recess.

Claim 35 (previously presented): The PLIM of claim 33, wherein said focusing element is micro-oscillated so that said planar laser illumination beam is micro-oscillated laterally along its planar extent.

Claim 36 (currently amended): The ~~PLIM~~ PLIM of Claim 33, wherein said recess has a wedge-like ~~geometry~~ geometry.

Claim 37 (currently amended): In a ~~PLIM~~ planar laser illumination and imaging (PLIIM) based system, a planar laser illumination module (PLIM), said PLIM comprising:

a laser diode for producing a laser beam along a direction of beam propagation;

a focusing lens for focusing said laser beam to its minimum beam width at a point which is the farthest distance at which said PLIIM based system is designed to capture images, and

a cylindrical lens element for expanding (i.e. spreading out) said laser beam along the said direction of beam propagation so that a substantially planar laser illumination beam (PLIB) is produced, which is characterized by a plane of propagation that is coplanar with the said direction of beam propagation.